

What is Claimed is:

Sub C 1. A control apparatus capable of controlling a plurality of instruments which have specified functions and move relatedly with mutual movements, comprising:

a command input means for inputting a command for controlling said plurality of instruments;

a control right acquisition means for acquiring a control right to control an arbitrary instrument among said plurality of instruments;

a storage means for storing information about said control right acquired by said control right acquisition means; and

a control restriction means for restricting to an input of the command input by said command input means for controlling another instrument, of which control right is not acquired, in accordance with control right information stored by said storage means.

2. The control apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:

said control right information includes information indicating at least three statuses: a status wherein no apparatus acquires said control right, another status wherein another apparatus acquires said control right and still another status wherein a self apparatus acquires said control right; and

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said control restriction means for restricting to an input of the control command input by said command input means, on the basis of said control right information.

3. The control apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein:
said control restriction means invalidates said control command input by said command input means when another apparatus acquires said control right.

4. The control apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:
said plurality of instruments which have the specified functions include a camera.

5. The control apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a display means for displaying at least said control right information stored in said storage means.

6. A control system capable of controlling a plurality of instruments, which have specified functions and are connected to a network and move relatedly with mutual movements, from remote locations, comprising:

a command input means for inputting a command for controlling said plurality of instruments;

a control right acquisition means for acquiring a right to control an arbitrary instrument among said plurality of instruments;

a storage means for storing information about said control right acquired by said control right acquisition means; and

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a control restriction means for restricting to control another instrument except for said instrument, of which control right is acquired, in accordance with said control right information stored by said storage means.

7. The control system according to Claim 6, wherein:
said plurality of instruments having said specified functions include a camera, further comprising:

an image signal pickup means for picking up an image signal produced from said camera; and

a display means for displaying at least one of control right stored in said storage means and said image signal picked up by said image signal pickup means.

8. A method of controlling a plurality of instruments which have specified functions and move relatedly with mutual movements, comprising:

a command input step of inputting a command in use for controlling said plurality of instruments;

a control right acquisition step of acquiring a control right of an arbitrary instrument among said plurality of instruments;

a storage step of storing information about said control right acquired at said control right acquisition step as a flag; and

a control restriction step of restricting to an input of the command for remotely controlling another instrument, of which control right is not acquired, in accordance with

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control right information indicated as said flag.

9. The control method according to Claim 8, wherein:

said storage step includes a step of storing information which indicates at least three statuses: a status wherein no apparatus acquires said control right, another status wherein anyone of other apparatuses acquires said control right and still another status wherein a self apparatus acquires said control right on said flag; and

said control restriction step includes a step of restricting to an input of the control command, in accordance with control right information which is stored as said flag.

10. The control method according to Claim 9, wherein:

said control restriction step includes a step of invalidating said control command input by said command input step when another apparatus acquires said control right.

11. The control method according to Claim 10, wherein:

said plurality of instruments having specified functions include a camera.

12. A method of controlling a plurality of instruments, which are connected to a network and have specified functions and move relatedly with mutual movements, from a plurality of remote locations comprising:

a command input step of inputting a command for controlling said plurality of instruments;

a control right acquisition step of acquiring a control right to control an arbitrary instrument out of said plurality

of instruments;

a storage step of storing information about said control right acquired at said control right acquisition step; and

a control restriction step of restricting to control another instruments except for said instrument, of which control right is not acquired, in accordance with said control right information.

13. The control method according to Claim 12, wherein: said plurality of instruments having said specified functions include a camera, further comprising:

an image signal pickup step of picking up an image signal produced from said camera;

a display step of displaying at least one of control right information which is stored at said storage step and said image signal picked up at said image pickup step.

14. A camera control system which is formed of a server/client constitution and enabling to control a plurality of cameras through a network, comprising:

a first camera for being controlled in an image pickup direction;

a second camera for being controlled in an image pickup direction;

a control means for controlling the image pickup direction of said second camera which picks up an area within an image pickup range of said first camera; and

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a control restriction means for restricting to control said first camera when an arbitrary client acquires a control right of said second camera.

15. The control system according to Claim 14, wherein:

said control restriction means restricts controlling of said first camera performed by another client does not acquire said control right.

16. A method of controlling a control system which is formed of a server/client constitution and enabling through a network to control capable of controlling an image pickup direction of a first camera and a second camera, comprising:

a control step of controlling the image pickup direction of said second camera, which picks up within an image pickup range of said camera; and

a control restriction step of restricting to control said first camera when an arbitrary client acquires a control right of said second camera.

17. The control method according to Claim 16, wherein:

said control restriction step includes a step of restricting controlling of said first camera performed by other clients except for said client which acquires said control right of said second camera.